Saskatchewan
Education

Report of the Minister's Advisory Committee on the School Year/School Day

86-00415

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September, 1985

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The following are not contained in full in this booklet but are available upon request from Saskatchewan Education:

Canadian/Provincial Comparisons — School Year/School Day

Survey of Educators

Survey of the Public

Briefs Submitted to the School Year/School Day Committee

Saskatchewan Federation of Home and School Associations' Survey

September, 1985

Hon. Patricia A. Smith
Minister of Education
Legislative Building
Regina, Saskatchewan

Dear Mrs. Smith:

In the spring of 1984, I had the privilege of being asked to chair the Minister's Advisory Committee on the School Year/ School Day. The Committee's task was to review the length and organization of the school year and school day and to assess the educational, societal, economic and administrative implications of possible alternatives. To carry out this mandate, we examined practices in other Canadian provinces and other parts of the world. We also gathered opinions from those directly involved in education and from the general public in Saskatchewan.

I would like to thank the Committee members for their dedication and commitment to the project. While the members represented different points of view, they worked together to provide direction for the improvement of education.

We would also like to thank all of those who provided us with the information upon which this report is based. We hope that this report offers an overall framework for the structure of the school calendar and at the same time recognizes the differing situations which exist throughout the province.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide you with our findings and recommendations.

Yours truly,

Glen H. Penner.

Glen Penner
Chairperson

Background

Educational systems and structures should meet the needs of the people they serve. As society changes, sometimes there is a need to review educational structures to ensure they are appropriate for contemporary needs. The school year/school day in Saskatchewan have been molded by custom and tradition but changing lifestyles, increasing energy costs and increasing diversification of the economic base suggest an examination of these traditional structures is in order. In many parts of North America other school jurisdictions, in similar circumstances, have experimented with alternate school schedules.

It is for these reasons that the Minister's Advisory Committee on the School Year/School Day was established in the spring of 1984. The mandate of the committee was to review the organization and length of the school year/school day. Special emphasis was placed on educational, societal, economic and administrative implications of possible alternatives to the existing school year/school day.

Education touches most people and groups in the province in one way or another. In order to give those groups most directly affected a voice, the committee included representatives from Saskatchewan's major educational agencies. The committee members were:

Saskatchewan School Trustees Association:

- Robert Mann
- Jake Volk

Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation:

- Frank Garritty
- Terry McKague

League of Educational Administrators, Directors and Superintendents:

- Glen Penner

Saskatchewan Federation of Home and School Associations:

- Dolores Neil

Saskatchewan Education:

- Jack Lloyd
- Ivan MacKay
- Ron Thomas (secretary)

Glen Penner was chosen as chairperson of the committee.

The committee was charged with the responsibility of obtaining input from other segments of society including interested groups, individuals and the general public. It was also charged with making recommendations to the Minister concerning the future structure of the school year/school day.

The Present Situation

At the present time some aspects of the school year/school day are governed by legislation, others are based on established practice, and still others are the responsibility of local school jurisidictions.

Length of School Year

The Education Act specifies the school year is 200 days in length, but also provides that the Minister may determine a lesser number of school days in any year if he/she considers it advisable. For the past several years, the Deputy Minister of Education has met with the presidents of the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation and the Saskatchewan School Trustees Association in order to provide the Minister of Education with a recommendation concerning length of the school year. The Minister has set the school year in accordance with those recommendations. For the past few years the school year has been 197 days.

The legislation does not differentiate between length of the teacher year and student year. In practice the school year set by the Minister has come to be the number of days that teachers work. Students generally attend school five to seven fewer days. When students are not in school, teachers participate in inservice sessions and preparation and wind-up activities at the beginning and end of the school year.

The number of days in the student year is determined by local boards of education and may vary from one part of the province to another.

School Hours

The legislation specifies the school program is to be conducted between the hours of 9:00 a.m. and 12:00 noon and between 1:30 p.m. and 4:00 p.m. It permits boards of education to alter or shorten these school hours by as much as 30 minutes without requesting permission from the Minister.

It also provides that, with the approval of the Minister of Education, boards of education can conduct classes outside of the 9 to 12 a.m. — 1:30 to 4 p.m. period mentioned in the legislation or can alter the prescribed school hours by more than 30 minutes.

The legislation specifies students should be allowed recess periods of between 15 and 30 minutes in each school day. However, it also provides that, where a board of education passes a resolution on the recommendation of the director or superintendent of education, the recess period in a day can total from 10 to 50 minutes.

Vacation Periods and Holidays

The Education Act makes some provision for holidays: Saturdays, Sundays, Good Friday, Labour Day, Thanksgiving Day, Remembrance Day, and the Queen's birthday (celebrated on Victoria Day) are specified. Dominion Day (Canada Day) is also identified as a holiday, but since it occurs on July 1, it becomes part of the summer vacation and is not celebrated as a separate holiday.

The legislation provides that additional holidays can be proclaimed by the Governor-General, Lieutenant-Governor, mayor or reeve, and that a board of education can declare other days (not exceeding one day at a time) as holidays. *The Act* also provides that boards of education can declare one or more Saturdays to be school days if they so wish.

The legislation sets guidelines for three specific vacation periods. Christmas vacation must commence not later than December 23 and must extend to at least January 2. Spring vacation (usually called Easter vacation) consists of the five days immediately following Easter Sunday. Summer vacation must be at least six weeks in length and must begin immediately after July 1. Individual boards of education can set a summer vacation period longer than the prescribed six weeks if desired, as long as they provide the number of school days determined by the Minister. Traditionally, most boards of education did choose a longer vacation period, usually eight weeks — all of July and August. In recent years, however, some boards have resumed school before the end of August and have introduced an additional two to five day mid-winter vacation.

Findings

One of the committee's major responsibilities was to determine whether the existing structure of the school year/school day should be changed and, if so, what changes should be made.

The committee recognized the need to gather information on which to base its deliberations and decisions. Accordingly, the committee decided to:

- prepare a literature review on the role of time as a variable in the educational process;
- obtain an indication of the views of those directly involved in education — teachers, principals, directors of education and trustees;
- obtain an indication of public opinion regarding the school year/school day;
- invite members of the public to write directly to the committee to express their views and opinions.

The activities listed above were all conducted under the sponsorship of the committee. In addition, the Saskatchewan Federation of Home and School Associations conducted an independent survey of its membership. Results of this survey were made available to the committee and became part of the data upon which the committee based its decisions.

Each of these activities are described in more detail in the sections which follow.

Literature Review

The literature review covered three themes relating to the role of time as a variable in the educational process. These were the organization and length of the school year/school day in other Canadian provinces and other parts of the world, the relationship between achievement and several measures of time, and plans for rescheduling the school year.

The School Year/School Day in Canada and the World

In Canada, education is a provincial responsibility. Therefore, the situation differs somewhat from one province to another. Because some provinces are less restrictive than others, it may also differ significantly from district to district within individual provinces.

However, some generalizations can be made. Students attend school for 10 months of the year, September to June. There is a six to eight week summer vacation during July and August and vacations at Christmas and Easter. Some schools may have semester breaks and other types of statutory or local holidays.

Length of the school year varies from 190 to 200 days depending upon the province. In Alberta length of the school year is set by local school boards. In all other provinces it is set by legislation. From two to 12 school days are non-instructional days; that is, days on which teachers are required to be at school, but students are not. In Saskatchewan, the legislation sets length of the school year but does not distinguish between instructional and non-instructional days. In all other provinces, this distinction is recognized in the legislation.

In all provinces, length of the school day is between five and six hours, although it may be reduced for students in primary grades or kindergarten. All provinces have legislation governing length of the school day, but some also provide flexibility for individual school boards.

School calendars of industrialized nations in other parts of the world vary substantially. At one end of the scale is France with 157 teaching days; at the other, Japan with 240 teaching days. In some countries classes are held on Saturday, in others they are not. Most countries have classes all day, but in Germany classes are usually held only in the morning. Attempting to equate organization of the school year with achievement is largely a futile task since many other variables affect educational outcomes. The most significant are structure of educational systems and of society as a whole.

Educational systems differ widely from country to country. They vary in participation rate, curriculum design and expectations for students.

Canada and the United States have comprehensive junior and senior high school systems in which most students in the relevant age groups are enrolled. In most European countries, the majority of students transfer from primary school to technical programs and many leave school as soon as it is legally possible. Only a minority of intellectually or socially elite students complete academic programs leading to university entrance.

In many European countries at the secondary level, the major content of curriculum is dictated by the central government and examination papers in key subject areas are set by a central body such as the ministry of education. Such a system contributes to rather concrete, clear-cut performance expectations; a situation which does not exist in Canada or the United States.

Educational systems also have differing expectations for students. In Japan, the school system is examination-oriented and pressure-laden. Students are expected to conform and to meet the heavy demands placed on them. Typically, there is much less pressure in the school systems of Canada and the United States.

The social climate within a country also has a profound effect on educational outcomes. This is the case in Japan, where the social climate is very different from that of North America. In Japan, adults and children alike are expected to conform and not to stand out from the group, while in North America individuality is stressed.

Although Japan has a longer year than either Canada or the United States, it is safe to assume this factor alone does not account for differences in achievement or other educational outcomes. The structure and values of Japanese society as a whole also play a major role.

To simply examine length and organization of the school year/school day in different countries and equate these factors to educational outcomes is inappropriate, since so many other factors also contribute to educational outcomes.

Time and Achievement

In general, the relationship between time and achievement becomes stronger as the measure of time moves from the most general to the most specific. For example, years of study correspond to achievement in some subject areas more than others.

There is no evidence that lengthening the school day or the school year will lead to higher achievement. Research is inconclusive and even contradictory on this issue.

Allocated time (the time scheduled for instruction in a particular subject) usually — but not always — has a relationship to achievement.

Time-on-task clearly has a relationship to achievement, but researchers do not agree on the strength and importance of this relationship. Some factors which affect the relationship between time-on-task and achievement include nature of the students and curriculum and quality of instruction.

Virtually all writers agree schools could use the existing time more effectively. Most studies show approximately half the day is actually used for instruction. Planned and unplanned non-instructional activities occupy the rest of the day. Better planning and administration within the school as a whole and within individual classrooms can substantially increase the amount of time available for learning.

The amount of time available for learning can also be increased by reducing absenteeism and school closures.

Problems with time vary from school to school. Individual schools should analyze their own situations before deciding upon a course of action. For example, in a smoothly run, well-organized school, it is probably appropriate to try to improve time-on-task. In a school with a very high rate of absenteeism — where whole days, weeks and months of instruction are lost — it is more productive to try to improve attendance. To offer one prescription for time use in all schools is inappropriate and simplistic and fails to recognize differing circumstances of individual schools.

Alternate School Calendars

While there are a large number of variations of organization of the school year, the most common are four-day week and extended school year.

In the four-day week plan, school is closed one day a week and either the school day or school year is lengthened to compensate. This plan is usually introduced to save energy and transportation costs. In most cases the plan does reduce school energy use, but energy use in the community as a whole tends to rise on days when the school is closed.

An extended school year program is any program which extends length of the traditional school year. These plans may be rotating or flexible in nature or may mandate additional days of attendance. They are introduced for a variety of educational and economic reasons.

Schools which are considering a change in the school year should conduct careful studies, consult parents, teachers, students and others with an interest in education. It is also appropriate to consult the business community since a change in the school year has implications for shops and restaurants. Among the items which should be considered are cost, length of school day, effect of school calendar on extracurricular and district-wide programs, and impact on parents, teachers, students, and the community as a whole. The effect of the proposed program on academic achievement should also be considered but it would be difficult to justify implementation of any type of alternate calendar on these grounds. Research is totally inconclusive with regard to the relationship between various school calendars and academic achievement. Generally, the way time is used within the school and classroom relates more closely to achievement than formal schedules and calendars.

Survey of Educators

A survey was commissioned to obtain opinions of those directly involved with the educational system.

A questionnaire was distributed to 75 chairmen of school boards, 75 school board members, 75 directors/superintendents, 200 principals and 600 teachers. Respondents were carefully selected to ensure all types of school jurisdictions, including urban, rural and Northern, were represented. The percentages of teachers selected from each type of jurisdiction were proportional to percentages in the teaching population as a whole.

The questionnaire included both multiple choice and open-ended questions which allowed respondents to express their opinions. Each of these types of questions are discussed separately below.

Multiple Choice Questions

A copy of the questionnaire used and a complete analysis of the multiple choice questions are available upon request. The points which follow are a summary of the major findings only.

- A substantial majority of respondents indicated they were either satisfied or very satisfied with length of the school year (79.1%) and school day (91.5%).
- Urban and rural respondents had differing opinions on when the school term should start and end. Generally, people in urban areas tended to show a slight preference for a term which started before the end of August and concluded before the end of June. People in rural areas showed a slight preference for a term which started later and continued until the end of June.
- The questionnaire inquired about starting dates of the school term for both teachers and students. Responses suggest the practice of having teachers start slightly earlier than students has gained acceptance.
- The questionnaire included a number of questions about various vacation periods. The majority of respondents (84.1%) felt Christmas break was satisfactory. Those who favoured a change wanted a longer break. Only a small minority (2.3%) felt Christmas break should be shorter. Spring break now occurs in the week following Easter Sunday; 67.8% of respondents favoured the present system, while 15.2% felt it should be the last week in March. The majority of respondents felt spring break should occur at the same time throughout the province. However, this opinion was expressed more strongly by directors of education (84.4%) than by teachers (61.7%).
- There were differences in how various categories of respondents answered a question about the number of days which should be in the school year for teachers. Thirty-nine percent of school board members felt length of the school year should be between 201 and 205 days. An equal number (39%) felt length of the school year should be from 196 to 200 days. All other categories of respondents favoured a school year for teachers of 196 to 200 days.

- The questionnaire also asked about length of the school year for students. Again, there were differences depending upon the job status of the respondent. The highest majority of directors, principals and teachers wanted the school year to be 190 to 195 days for students, while school board members and chairmen of school boards favoured 196 to 200 days.
- The majority of respondents (84.9%) favoured the present arrangement which allows for local flexibility in setting opening and closing dates of school and scheduling of school holidays.
- There were differences of opinion in how the length of the school year should be established. Overall, 51.3% of respondents wanted the length of the school year to be established by legislation; 30.1% favoured negotiation and 11.7% felt it should be set by boards. The job status of respondents influenced the way they answered this question. Directors of education, school board chairmen and members showed a strong preference for setting the length of the school year by legislation — 83.3% and 81.4% respectively. Teachers were almost equal in their degree of support for establishing length of the school year by legislation (39.6%) and by negotiation (38.9%).
- Overall, the majority of respondents (70.8%) were in favour of setting daily hours of school operation by legislation. A significantly higher percentage of rural (74.3%) than urban (64.8%) respondents were in favour of this option. The job status of respondents also affected the way they answered this question. Directors had the highest (92.4%) level of support for legislating daily hours of school operation. Although the majority of teachers also supported this method, their support (63.8%) was lowest of all job status groups.
- A majority of respondents were opposed to lengthening the school day in order to shorten the length of the school year. Overall, 53% were opposed, 40.6% in favour. There were significant differences between urban and rural responses to this question, with urban areas showing a higher rate of opposition to a lengthened school day than rural areas.
- At the present time, *The Education Act* provides that a board of education can vary the school schedule and calendar beyond the limits prescribed in *The Act*, with the permission of the Minister of Education. A large majority of respondents (77.1%) felt this arrangement should continue.

Open-Ended Questions

The questionnaire also included a number of open-ended questions which allowed respondents to express their opinions. Although the comments were diverse, some categories did emerge.

Saskatchewan's weather and its relationship to the school schedule was mentioned frequently. Weather was offered as a reason for a variety of scheduling arrangements. For example, some people said it was too hot for school in late June; others said it was too hot for school in late August. Some suggested there should be no school in January because of the weather; others said the length of the school day should be increased in January so students can have more holidays during the nice summer months.

There was general consensus that a break is needed between Christmas and Easter. This is particularly true if Easter occurs later in the year. Many who discussed this issue suggested a short vacation in late February or early March would improve the morale of teachers and students alike.

The need for teacher work time at the beginning of the school year was mentioned frequently. Teachers need to organize their classrooms and plan for the year ahead.

Christmas vacation was generally agreed to be a time for family and community activities, but there was no similar consensus concerning Easter. Some respondents indicated spring vacation should follow Easter because of its religious significance. Others suggested spring vacation should be moved to an earlier date because Easter had lost most of its religious meaning.

Several respondents described a situation which was unique to their school or area and indicated this situation necessitated a change in school hours or schedule. One teacher indicated that at some times of the year entire families leave the community to hunt or fish and that school has to adapt itself to the local lifestyle. In some cases opinions were contradictory. For example, some respondents from rural areas indicated children are needed at home to help with gardening and harvest and a later school starting date is preferable. In contrast, some urban respondents were critical of "harvest thinking" and suggested the traditional structure of the school year is an anachronism.

Some individuals suggested the school day should be lengthened so teachers and students could have a three-day weekend every other week. Others expressed concern about the possibility of a lengthened school day. Teacher and student fatigue, the effect of a longer day on learning, and a concern for children who ride school buses were mentioned.

The respondents demonstrated clearly that tradition and previous practice play a major role in shaping people's thinking about the school schedule. The multiple choice portion of the questionnaire asked respondents to indicate when the school term should begin for teachers and students, when it should end, when Christmas and Easter breaks should occur, and how long these breaks should be. Open-ended questions asked respondents to give their reasons for preferring a particular scheduling arrangement. Many respondents indicated previous practice was satisfactory, and as explanation for their answers made comments like, "just tradition, I guess, because we're used to having it then, because that's when it always comes."

In general, open-ended responses illustrated Saskatchewan's people have diverse opinions and lifestyles and individual schools differ from each other in both large and small ways. They suggested no single school schedule or calendar would be appropriate for every situation. They also suggested force of tradition should not be ignored when considering scheduling arrangements.

Survey of the Public

In order to obtain a broad range of opinion, a survey of the general public was commissioned. A local research firm regularly conducts a semi-annual omnibus survey in which several institutions participate. The School Year/School Day Committee participated in the fall 1984 program.

The survey was conducted with a random sampling of 1,038 adults. Respondents were chosen so those living in rural and urban areas were selected in proportion to the urban/rural population of the province as a whole. Personal door-to-door interviewing was used to administer the questionnaire to respondents in their homes.

Because the sample was random, it included childless people and people with children not attending school, as well as people who have school age children. Full results of the survey are available upon request from Saskatchewan Education. Only the major findings are discussed below.

- The first question on the survey asked respondents how satisfied they were with length of the school year and how school days are organized. The majority of respondents (63.6%) indicated they were either very satisfied or quite satisfied. Respondents were then asked a number of questions relating to possible changes in the school year/school day. Near the end of the survey those who had initially expressed satisfaction were asked if, in light of possible changes discussed, they were still satisfied with length of the school year and organization of the school day. The majority (71.2%) were still satisfied. Among these people, those without school age children were more likely to state uncertainty or say the question did not relate to them. Respondents with school age children gave fewer neutral responses and tended to express either satisfaction or dissatisfaction with length of the school year and organization of the school day.
- The majority of respondents (55.0%) would like to see the school term begin the day after Labour Day. People with school age children were more likely to favour this date (61.6%) than people without (50.8%).
- The largest percentage of respondents (72.1%) stated the school year should end June 30. Again there were differences between respondents with school age children and those without; 77.4% of people with school age children favoured a June 30th ending date as opposed to 68.3% of people without school age children.
- The majority of respondents stated the two week Christmas break is satisfactory (73.9%).
- The majority of respondents stated spring or Easter break should occur the week after Good Friday (76.0%). Among parents with school age children, 80.8% held this opinion.
- The majority of respondents stated the school year should be between 196 and 200 days long (67.8%).
- The largest percentage of respondents (47.8%) stated the present arrangement allowing for local flexibility should continue with regards to opening and closing dates of schools and schedule of school holidays.

- When asked what method of providing additional time would be preferred if the school day were to be lengthened by one-half hour, the largest percentage of respondents (38.3%) stated there should be no change to the length of the school day. Parents with school age children expressed this opinion more strongly than people without school age children (45.1% and 33.6% respectively).

Written Submissions

As another means of obtaining public opinion, the committee invited the submission of written briefs. Advertisements were placed in newspapers and education-oriented publications. A total of 32 briefs were received. The submissions ranged from one page letters to lengthy documents. The majority came from boards of education and school staffs, although a few were received from individuals and one from a local Chamber of Commerce.

It is clear that individuals and groups submitting briefs accept the basic structure of the school year/school day which exists at the present time.

A few writers indicated no changes at all were needed. They felt the existing system is working well. None suggested the basic system should be changed in any drastic or major ways. While the majority of briefs submitted suggested only minor modifications to the existing system, there wasn't a clear consensus on what these minor modifications should be. Some people wanted a longer school day and some a shorter. Some felt length of the school year should be legislated; others favoured negotiation. Suggestions for length of the school year ranged from 180 to 200 days. Various dates were proposed for summer vacation.

Occasionally, when suggesting a particular modification to the school year or school day, writers mentioned such a change would make the school calendar more suited to local needs. For example, one brief stated a longer summer vacation would allow students to work in the family-oriented tourist businesses common in that particular area.

Like the open-ended responses in the educators' questionnaire, the briefs illustrated there is a considerable variety of opinion concerning length and organization of the school year/school day.

Saskatchewan Federation of Home and School Associations' Survey

The Saskatchewan Federation of Home and School Associations conducted an independent survey of its membership. A questionnaire addressing a number of issues relating to length and organization of the school year/school day was distributed by local branches. A total of 359 questionnaires were returned. Individuals were not asked to indicate whether they had school age children. It is likely, given the nature of the Home and School Association, that most did. Upon completion of the survey, results were made available to the School Year/School Day Committee. Highlights of these results follow.

- The majority of respondents felt the school term should begin the day after Labour Day (63.0%) and end June 30 (69.0%).
- The majority of respondents felt Christmas break should be two weeks long (87.0%) and spring (or Easter) break one week long (85.0%). The week following Easter Sunday was the preferred time for spring break (80.0%).
- When asked what method of providing additional time would be preferred if the school day were to be lengthened by one-half hour, the majority indicated they did not wish to see a change in length of the school day (51.0%). Written comments on the questionnaire indicated respondents were concerned about length of the day for children who ride the bus.
- Generally, respondents were opposed to major changes in structure of the school calendar. Fifty-seven percent were opposed to shortening the school week to four days every second week. Seventy-six percent were opposed to closing schools during the month of January.
- The majority of respondents indicated the length of the school year should remain at 197 days (67.0%). Among those who advocated a change, 20.0% said it should be further reduced and 8.0% said it should be the maximum allowable under legislation — 200 days.
- Retaining the present arrangement which gives individual boards of education some flexibility in planning the school year was favoured by 85.0% of respondents. Only 14.0% felt all schools in the province should be on the same schedule.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The findings of the Minister's Advisory Committee on the School Year/School Day indicate there is widespread public acceptance of the present length and organization of both the school year and school day in Saskatchewan.

While opinions concerning desired length of the school year vary from 180 to 205 days, the majority of people believe a school year from 196 to 200 days is appropriate. However, there is no consensus on how length of the school year should be set. Some favour legislation; others favour negotiation.

It is acknowledged, particularly by those directly involved with education, that there should be a difference in length of the school year for teachers and for students. The school year specified in legislation or set by the Minister should be the number of days during which teachers are employed. Students should attend fewer days; the range of 190 to 195 days was mentioned most frequently.

There was also a high level of acceptance of the present length of the school day. The public appears to be reluctant to extend the length of the school day, often citing concern for children who ride school buses.

The relationship between length of the school year and day and achievement is unclear. There is no evidence that either a longer or shorter school year or school day directly affects educational achievement. Education is a complex process in which many factors play a role.

Although there are some urban/rural differences, a school year for students which begins after Labour Day and concludes at the end of June is generally favoured. The majority of people prefer a two week vacation break at Christmas and a break during the week immediately following Easter Sunday. Further, there is overwhelming support for taking spring break at the same time throughout the province.

All groups surveyed felt boards of education should continue to have some flexibility in determining opening and closing dates of school and scheduling school vacations. As well, the public favoured the present arrangement which allows boards of education to vary the school schedule and calendar beyond the limits prescribed in legislation with the approval of the Minister of Education.

Recommendation 1:

That for the present time, existing arrangements regarding length and organization of the school year/school day be maintained.

While there is overall satisfaction with the status quo, there are also some groups who wish to make changes to the structure and organization of the school year/school day.

Most frequently, this desire for change is based on local circumstances. For example, the economic base of some communities requires children's labour at certain times of the year. As well, there are distinct differences in preferences of urban and rural areas of the province.

A province-wide mandated change in the school calendar would not be appropriate since only a minority want change. Furthermore, the changes desired are individualistic in nature and could not easily be accommodated within provincial legislation. The solution is to provide additional flexibility so schools or school jurisdictions in special circumstances can tailor the school calendar to their needs. At the same time there must be a mechanism to ensure changes are based on educational, social or economic need and not simply on a desire for change for its own sake.

Recommendation 2:

That boards of education wishing to make changes to the school year/school day that exceed those which are possible now, may continue to apply to the Minister of Education for approval. Such approval will depend on the following conditions being met:

- The number of hours of instructional time should not be less than the number normally applied to the school year.
- Summer vacation should not be shorter than six consecutive weeks.
- Christmas break should not be shorter than the specified number of days currently in effect.

In addition to meeting these requirements, applications to modify the school year should provide evidence that:

- Educational, social or economic benefits would result from the change.
- Consultation with those affected by the proposed changes has been carried out, resulting in the approval of both parents and school personnel.
- Procedures for monitoring and evaluating the changes have been agreed upon.

Recommendation 3:

That a commission, made up of representatives of Saskatchewan's major educational organizations, be formed to advise the Minister of Education with respect to:

- Applications to modify the school year in a significant way.
- Length of the school year.
- Other school year/school day matters which may be referred by the Minister.